

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 MMO-01 AID-05 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06

TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01

NSC-05 SS-15 STR-04 CEA-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 FEA-01 ERDA-05 FPC-01 INT-05

OES-07 ACDA-07 AGRE-00 /140 W

-----063726 170943Z /15

R 170811Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1122

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EALR, ECRP, ECON, EGEN, EFIN, AS

SUBJECT: FY 78 AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL BUDGET - CERP 0200

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REF: (A) CANBERRA 5701 (NOTAL), (B) 76 CANBERRA 6002,

(C) 76 CANBERRA 5968 (NOTAL), (D) 76 CANBERRA 5848

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ARE MAIN NUMBERS IN FY-78 GOA BUDGET

INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT AUGUST 16. ALL DOLLAR FIGURES

ARE IN AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS; CURRENT PARITY IS AUSTRALIAN DOLS 1.00 EQUALS US DOLS 1.10). BUDGET PROVIDES FOR EXPENDITURES OF DOLS 26656 MILLION (10.5 PERCENT OVER FY 77) AND TOTAL REVENUES OF DOLS 24439 MILLION (14.3 PERCENT OVER FY 77). TOTAL DEFICIT IS DOLS 2217 MILLION, ABOUT 523 MILLION LOWER THAN PREVIOUS YEAR. SPENDING INCREASES OF LESS THAN APPROX 10 PERCENT REPRESENT REAL CUTS. ABOVE AVERAGE INCREASES FOR HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE, GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND NOT ALLOCATED TO FUNCTION. BELOW AVERAGE INCREASES FOR DEFENSE, EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND RECREATION. ABSOLUTE CUTS FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC SERVICES. TREASURY PREDICTS REAL GROWTH IN GROSS NON-FARM PRODUCT OF 4 PERCENT, GROWTH IN M3 TAGGED AT 8-10 PERCENT. INFLATION RATE PREDICTED TO BE SLIGHTLY LOWER IN FY-78 THAN 10.2 PERCENT (MEDIBANK EXCLUDED) FY-77 RATE. END SUMMARY

2. NEW MEASURES: THE TREASURER ANNOUNCED TAX CUTS AND CHANGES IN TAXATION SYSTEM AS FOLLOWS: PERSONAL TAX RATE BRACKETS ARE REDUCED FROM 7 TO 4 WITH MODESTLY REDUCED RATES. TAXPAYERS RECEIVING LESS THAN DOLS 3,751 (5,485 WITH DEPENDENT SPOUSE) WILL PAY NO TAX; TAXPAYERS IN DOLS 3,751 TO 16,000 BRACKET WILL HAVE STANDARD TAX RATE OF 32 PERCENT; TAXPAYERS IN DOLS 16,000 TO 32,000 BRACKET WILL HAVE STANDARD RATE OF 46 PERCENT; AND TAXPAYERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EARNING MORE THAN DOLS 32,000 WILL HAVE STANDARD RATE OF 60 PERCENT. THESE CHANGES REDUCE MARGINAL RATE ON AVERAGE WAGE FROM 35 PERCENT TO 32 PERCENT. CORPORATE TAX RATE INCREASED 3.5 PERCENT TO 46 PERCENT. LYNCH ANNOUNCED CONTINUATION OF PHASEOUT OF COAL EXPORT LEVY (THIS WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTEL). LYNCH ANNOUNCED BEGINNING OF PROGRAM TO GRADUALLY BRING ALL AUSTRALIAN CRUDE OIL PRICES UP TO WORLD PARITY LEVELS AND ANNOUNCED INCREASE IN LEVY ON EXISTING FIELDS FROM DOLS 2 TO DOLS 3 PER BARREL (DETAILS WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTEL). LYNCH ALSO WARNED THAT LEVY MAY BE REPLACED BY RESOURCES TAX.

3. AGGREGATES. OUTLAYS ESTIMATED AT DOLS 26656 MILLION, A 10.5 PERCENT INCREASE OVER FY 77. RECEIPTS EXPECTED TO TOTAL DOLS 24439 MILLION, 14.3 PERCENT UP ON FY 77. OVERALL DEFICIT DOLS 2217 MILLION, WITH DOMESTIC DEFICIT PEGGED AT DOLS - 1,347 MILLION. OVERALL DEFICIT DOWN DOLS 523 MILLION FROM ACTUAL FY 77 FIGURE WHILE DOMESTIC DEFICIT DOWN 648 MILLION.

4. FUNCTIONAL OUTLAYS AND PERCENTAGES OF INCREASE OR DECREASE OVER FY 77 ARE AS FOLLOWS (IN MILLIONS):

DEFENSE DOLS 2343, 7.4 PERCENT; EDUCATION, DOLS 2371, 9.8 PERCENT; HEALTH, DOLS 2814, 10.7 PERCENT; SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE, DOLS 7,248, 12.7 PERCENT; URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEC AND ENVIRONMENT, DOLS 168, -33 PERCENT; CULTURE AND RECREATION, DOLS 261, 1.4 PERCENT; ECONOMIC SERVICES, DOLS 1489, -7.0 PERCENT; GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES, DOLS 1831, 13.4 PERCENT; NOT ALLOCATED TO FUNCTION, DOLS 7,635, 16.8 PERCENT.

5. ON REVENUE SIDE FOLLOWING MAJOR PROJECTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE, WITH PERCENTAGE INCREASE OR DECREASE OVER FY 77 (IN MILLIONS): IMPORT DUTIES, DOLS 1315, 14.1 PERCENT; COAL EXPORT LEVY, DOLS 93, -23.1 PERCENT; EXCISE DUTY, DOLS 2792, 12.3 PERCENT; SALES TAXES, DOLS 1865, 13.0 PERCENT; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PERCENT; NET PAY-AS-YOU-EARN (PAYE) INCOME TAX DOLS 9995, 17.2 PERCENT; OTHER PERSONAL INCOME TAX, DOLS 2,889, 14.4 PERCENT; CORPORATE INCOME TAX, DOLS 2998, 6.2 PERCENT; (TOTAL GENERAL TAXATION REVENUE, DOLS 22,323, 13.6 PERCENT); RECEIPTS BY GOVERNMENT ON INTEREST, RENT AND DIVIDENDS, DOLS 1814, 11.4 PERCENT.

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OES-07 ACDA-07 AGRE-00 /140 W
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R 170811Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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INFO USMISSION GENEVA
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6. OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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A. DEFENSE SHARE: PREDICTED DEFENSE OUTLAYS WILL INCREASE ONLY 7.4 PERCENT, THUS NOT KEEPING PACE WITH EXPECTED INFLATION. SHARE OF DEFENSE EXPENDITURE IN TOTAL BUDGET AT 8.8 PERCENT IS SLIGHTLY DOWN FROM 8.95 PERCENT LEVEL REACHED IN FY 77 BUT IS ABOVE 8.47 PERCENT LEVEL IN FY 76. SHARE IS, HOWEVER, WILL WELL BELOW LEVELS OF 9.1 PERCENT IN FY 75 AND 10.8 PERCENT IN FY 74. FUNDS FOR NAVAL CONSTRUCTION CUT BY 7.7 PERCENT, FROM DOLS 59.1 MILLION TO DOLS 51.4 MILLION. VUY OG 9.0 PERCENT ALSO REGISTERED IN ADVANCES TO STATES FOR SERVICE HOUSING, FROM DOLS 35.1 MILLION TO DOLS 26.1 MILLION. FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE INCREASES ALSO REGISTERED: AIRCRAFT AND ASSOCIATED INITIAL EQUIPMENT, DOLS 101.4 MILLION, 11.6 PERCENT; OTHER CAPITAL EQUIPMENT AND STORES, DOLS 109.2 MILLION, 36.0 PERCENT; AND SUPPORTING EQUIPMENT AND STORES DOLS 222.9 MILLION, 26.3 PERCENT TOTAL DEFENSE EQUIPMENT AND STORES, DOLS 616.5 MILLION, 73.1 PERCENT.

B. FOREIGN AID: TOTAL AID PAYMENTS ESTIMATED TO INCREASE 11.8 PERCENT TO DOLS 425.8 MILLION. OF THIS TOTAL, DOLS 223.4 MILLION, OR 52.5 PERCENT, IS DESTINED FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA, A DECREASE OF DOLS 4.7 MILLION FROM FY 77. DECREASE IN AID TO PNG IS DUE TO RUNDOWN IN PAYMENTS IN RESPECT TO TERMINATION AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS PAYABLE TO EXPATRIATE OFFICERS IN FORMER

ADMINISTRATION. OTHER BILATERAL PROJECT AID TO INCREASE 36 PERCENT TO DOLS 71.0 MILLION, REFLECTING INCREASED AID TO SOUTH PACIFIC, AN EXPANDED AID COMMITMENT TO INDONESIA AND INCREASED AID TO OTHER MEMBERS OF ASEAN. FOOD AID TO INCREASE 7.7 PERCENT TO DOLS 26.6 MILLION. OF MULTILATRAL AID TOTAL OF DOLS 85.6 MILLION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(UP 49.4 PERCENT), LIONS SHARE WILL GO THROUGH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, (DOLS 57.0 MILLION OR 66.6 PERCENT) AND UN PROGRAMS (DOLS 16.5 MILLION OR 19.3 PERCENT), WITH BALANCE GOING THROUGH REGIONAL AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

C. EXPORT DEVELOPMENT GRANTS: ENTIRE QUESTION HAS BEEN REFERRED TO INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION. PAYMENTS IN FY 78 ON NEW CLAIMS UNDER SCHEME WILL BE RESTRICTED, AS IN FY 77, TO DOLS 10,000 IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, WITH THE BALANCE OF LARGER GRANTS BEING HELD OVER TO THE FOLLOWING YEAR. BUDGET PROVISION OF DOLS 30 MILLION COVERS ELIGIBLE CLAIMS FOR GRANTS OUTSTANDING AT END OF FY 77 (ESTIMATED AT DOLS 18 MILLION) AND UP TO DOLS 12 MILLION IN RESPECT TO NEW COMMITMENTS FALLING DUE IN FY-78.

D. AIR TRANSPORT: LYNCH ANNOUNCED THAT GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED NOT RPT NOT TO INCREASE AIR NAVIGATION CHARGES DURING 1977. ESTIMATED REVENUE OF DOLS 11.1 MILLION FROM AIRPORT RENTALS REFLECTS GOVERNMENTS "DECISION TO CHARGE FULL ECONOMIC RENTALS AT ALL CAPITAL CITY AIRPORT TERMINALS."

E. CRUDE OIL PRICING POLICY: GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN PHASED PROGRAM TO BRING AUSTRALIAN CRUDE OIL PRICES UP TO LEVEL OF WORLD PARITY. LEVY ON EXISTING PRODUCTION INCREASED FROM DOLS 2 TO DOLS 3 PER BARREL, ALTHOUGH LEVY MAY BE REPLACED BY RESOURCES TAX (CRUDE OIL DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTEL.

F. CONTINUED RUNDOWN OF COAL EXPORT LEVY: GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED A FURTHER STEP IN POLICY, BEGUN IN FY 77, TO PHASE OUT COAL EXPORT LEVY AND STATED ITS DETERMINATION TO ELIMINATE IT NEXT YEAR. GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED TAX OF 5 CENTS A TONNE ON ALL COAL PRODUCED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BE USED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES. (COAL DEVELOPMENTS
WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL).

G. CORPORATE INCOME TAX AND TAX ON FOREIGN FILM
ROYALTIES: GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT CORPORATE INCOME
TAX WOULD INCREASE BY 3.5 PERCENT TO 46 PERCENT.
GOVERNMENT ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT EFFECTIVE AUGUST 17,
FILM AND VIDEO TAPE ROYALTIES PAID OVERSEAS WILL BEAR
TAX OF 10 PERCENT OF GROSS PAYMENT. THIS REPLACES
SYSTEM IN EFFECT SINCE 1942, WHEREBY ROYALTIES TAXED
AS IF THEIR PROFIT CONTENT WERE 10 PERCENT, GIVING
AN AUSTRALIAN TAX YIELD OF SLIGHTLY OVER 4 PERCENT
OF THE GROSS ROYALTIES.

H. INDIRECT TAXES: AS ANTICIPATED IN REF A, GOVERNMENT
DID NOT INCREASE INDIRECT TAXES ON SUCH CPI AND CONSUMER
SENSITIVE ITEMS AS TOBACCO PRODUCTS, BEER AND SPIRITS.

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I. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: LYNCH STATED THAT BUDGET AND
OTHER MEASURES DESIGNED BRING ABOUT GROWTH IN BROADLY
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DEFINED VOLUME OF MONEY (M3) IN 8-10 PERCENT RANGE
DURING FY 78, OR SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN 10-12 PERCENT RANGE
TARGETED FOR FY 77. LYNCH HIMSELF MADE NO DIRECT
PREDICTIONS ON EXPECTED INFLATION RATE IN FY 78 AND
ATTACHED TREASURY STATEMENT CAREFULLY WORDED TO EFFECT
THAT IN JUNE QUARTER OF FY 78 THE CPI CAN BE EXPECTED
TO INCREASE BETWEEN 2 AND 2.5 PERCENT, THUS IMPLYING
A RATE OF INCREASE OF BETWEEN 8-10 ON
ANNUAL BASIS. IN SPEECH AT NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ON
AUGUST 17, TREASURER LYNCH PREDICTED A REDUCTION BUT
REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN MORE SPECIFICALLY THAN A
REFERENCE TO POSSIBLE 8-10 PERCENT ANNUAL RATE BY JUNE QUARTER
OF FY 78. GOVERNMENT PREDICTS GROWTH OF GROSS NON-FARM
PRODUCTS OF ABOUT 4 PERCENT IN REAL TERMS IN FY 78.
PREDICTED RECEIPTS FROM PAYE PERSONAL INCOME TAX
COLLECTIONS ESTIMATED ON BASIS OF INCREASE OF 10.5
PERCENT ON AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS AND 0.75 PERCENT
ON AVERAGE LEVEL OF WAGE AND SALARY EARNER EMPLOYMENT
(BOTH EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF MALE UNITS). NO STRONG
IMPROVEMENT IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE PREDICTED ALTHOUGH
THERE MAY BE IMPROVEMENT TOWARD END OF PERIOD. PRIVATE
CONSUMPTION SPENDING IS EXPECTED TO GROW AT A MODERATE
RATE OVER COURSE OF FY 78, ACCOMPANIED BY A LOWER
AVERAGE SAVINGS RATIO THAN IN FY 77, BUT REMAINING WELL
ABOVE ITS AVERAGE LEVELS IN THE 1960S. INVESTMENT IN
DWELLINGS EXPECTED TO RETURN DURING FY 78 TO LEVELS
ACHIEVED IN MID-1976. INVESTMENT IN PLANT AND EQUIPMENT
EXPECTED SEE FLATNESS OF EARLY 1977 GIVE WAY TO
SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OVER COURSE OF FY 78. OVERALL
THERE IS EXPECTED TO BE A BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT
IN EARLY MONTHS OF FY 78. TREASURY STATES, HOWEVER,
THAT WITH AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL RESERVES NOW
REASONABLY VALUED AND WITH A RENEWED PROGRAM OF MODERATE
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BUT STEADY BORROWING ABROAD ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNT, AUSTRALIA'S RESERVES ARE SUCH THAT NO DIFFICULTY IS EXPECTED IN FINANCING SUCH A DEFICIT. DURING LATTER PART OF FY 78, THE BALANCE IS EXPECTED TO STRENGTHEN WITH RESUMPTION OF ADDITION TO RESERVES.

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7. COMMENT: IN BRINGING DOWN FY 1978 BUDGET GOVERNMENT HAS FOLLOWED THROUGH ON ITS PRE-BUDGET COMMITMENTS TO LIMIT EXPENDITURES TO ZERO REAL GROWTH AND TO REDUCE THE DEFICIT. MANY OBSERVERS WILL SEE INCOME TAX "REFORMS" AS A PRECURSOR TO AN EARLY ELECTION, AS INDEED IT MAY IN EFFECT BE. DURING HIS BUDGET SPEECH AND AGAIN EVEN MORE EXPLICITLY DURING SPEECH AT NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LYNCH TOOK CONSIDERABLE PAINS TO TRY AND SHIFT BLAME FOR HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT TO CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION FOR UNREASONABLY INCREASING WAGES AND THUS MAKING EMPLOYERS UNWILLING TAKE ON NEW EMPLOYEES, ESPECIALLY YOUTHS, BECAUSE OF THE HIGH COST OF REAL WAGES.

8. AS EXPECTED, GOVERNMENT UANNOUNCED INCREASES OF 33 PERCENT (TO DOLS 102.7 MILLION) IN ITS SPECIAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM (SYETP) BY INCREASING ELIGIBILITY FROM 19 TO 25 YEARS. PROGRAM MAY WELL BE EXPANDED DURING YEAR.

9. REACTION OF PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION CRITICAL AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED AS WAS REACION OF ACTU PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE.

10. THE QUESTION IS NATURALLY ASKED WHETHER THIS IS A BUDGET PURPOSEFULLY DESIGNED FOR AN EARLY ELECTION. THE ANSWER WOULD SEEM TO BE THAT WHILE BUDGET ITSELF DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AS LIBERAL AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD AN EARLY ELECTION IN MIND, THE INCOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAX PROVISIONS (AND THE HOLD-THE-LINE ON INFLATION THEME) COULD CERTAINLY BE USED BY GOVERNMENT AS ELECTION MATERIAL IF OTHER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS DURING COMING MONTHS APPEAR TO MAKE EARLY ELECTIONS ADVISEABLE. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE BUDGET IN ITSELF DOES NOT PROVIDE A CLEAR INDICATION REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EARLY ELECTION. ALSTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BUDGETS, CERP, TEXT, BUDGET ESTIMATES, ANNUAL REPORTS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: CANBERRA
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Message ID: a5316b59-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
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Reference: 77 CANBERRA 5701, 76 CANBERRA 6002, 76 CANBERRA 5968, 76 CANBERRA 5848
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Date: 12-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1581031
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FY 78 AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL BUDGET - CERP 0200 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
TAGS: EALR, ECRP, ECON, EGEN, EFIN, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a5316b59-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009